

What is claimed is:

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### Claims

1. A system for facilitating communications comprising:

one or more programs for communicating with a participant over a network, each  
5 program including a plurality of instructions including a first instruction for sending a  
communication to a participant and a second instruction for awaiting a response from the  
participant;

an engine for executing the programs, the engine being able to process simultaneously a  
plurality of instances of each of the programs;

10 a database system for storing data regarding each instance of each of the programs that  
has not yet completed and for storing data regarding each participant with whom the programs  
are communicating; and

a monitoring interface for providing to a user of the system information about the  
execution of the programs.

15 2. The system of claim 1, further comprising a graphical user interface for creating  
the programs.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the graphical user interface provides a set of steps  
that a user can select for creating the programs.

20 4. The system of claim 1, wherein each instance of each program can be in one of a  
plurality of states at any time, the plurality of states including a running state, an idle state, and a  
paused state.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the database system includes a table for  
maintaining entries for each instance of each program being processed by the engine, wherein  
each entry includes an identifier for the instance of the program, an identifier for the participant  
25 with which the instance communicates, and an identifier for the current state of the program.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein the database system further includes a table for  
maintaining entries for each variable for which there is data for each instance of each program  
being processed by the engine, wherein each entry includes an identifier for the instance of the  
program, an identifier for the variable, and an indication of the value of the variable.

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7. The system of claim 5, wherein each program includes at least one instruction for causing the program to enter the paused state while it awaits the occurrence of one or more events.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the database system further includes a table for maintaining, for each instance of each program that is awaiting the occurrence of one or more events, an entry for each such event, wherein each entry includes an identifier for the instance of the program, an identifier for the event, and an identifier for the next instruction to be executed by the instance of the program upon the occurrence of the corresponding event.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein the monitoring interface includes one or more alert indicators, each alert indicator relating to one or more of the programs.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the monitoring interface includes one or more controllers, each controller permitting a user to adjust a user-selectable parameter.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein one controller permits a user to adjust a value for a shape-specific parameter across each of a plurality of programs.

12. A method for facilitating communications, comprising the steps of:  
preparing graphical representations of one or more programs for communicating with a participant over a network;  
converting each graphical representation into an executable program having a plurality of instructions;  
simultaneously maintaining a plurality of instances of the programs; and  
at least once for each instance of each of the programs:

sending an electronic communication to a participant;  
pausing execution of the instance of the program; and  
resuming execution of the program following the occurrence of a specified event.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of resuming execution includes responding to the occurrence of the specified event, identifying an instance of a program that is available for resumed execution, loading the corresponding executable program into a computer memory, and executing a sequence of the instructions for that program.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of responding to the occurrence of the specified event includes updating a first database entry to indicate that the instance of the program is available for resumed execution and updating a second database entry to indicate the

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